

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### **Lewis Milling, Inc.**

#### **Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions**

#### **Lewis Milling Renovates Mill, Creates 30 Jobs**

##### **Client Profile:**

Lewis Milling processes raw rice to produce polished or brown rice. The rice is bulk-shipped or packaged in either small or large bags. Located in Earle, Arkansas, the company employs approximately 30 people.

##### **Situation:**

Lewis Milling is a new business, recently launched thanks to the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta (ECD), which provided construction funds, followed by long-term financing by the USDA to provide an invaluable employment opportunity to this economically challenged area of the Mississippi River delta. Although Mr. Lewis previously owned and operated a rice mill, he needed technical support to design and construct the mill. The ECD referred Mr. Lewis to the Arkansas Manufacturing Extension Network (the Network), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for technical assistance to build his mill.

##### **Solution:**

The Network met with Mr. Lewis to review the mill's preliminary plans and to examine the building and equipment located at the site. Mr. Lewis needed help selecting a consulting engineering firm capable of providing the detailed design drawings required to select additional equipment, expand the building, and construct the mill. The Network agreed to help Lewis Milling select an engineering firm, represent Mr. Lewis to the selected firm during the design process, assist in the selection of a general contractor, and provide technical support during construction and mill start-up.

Once a consulting engineering firm was selected, the design phase began with the initial transfer of design goals to the consultants, field trips to examine the existing structures, and collection of detailed information about process equipment previously purchased.

Upon completion of the design phase, the Network participated in the transfer of information to general contractors, the review of quotes, and the selection of a contractor. Unfortunately, the quotes were all for approximately twice the available funds. The Network subsequently met and worked with several of the general contractors to determine what changes, if any, could result in a functional mill for the available funds. These meetings resulted in one contractor reducing the cost of the original quote by approximately 40 percent,

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

bringing the cost within budget.

Over the months that followed, construction continued with the expansion of the facilities, construction of support structures for the equipment, and installation of the equipment. During this period, the Network kept in constant contact with Mr. Lewis, representatives of ECD, and the general contractor to review progress on the mill and equipment installations, take photographs to document the work, and transmit status reports, with photographs, to the parties involved. Finally, the mill was completed, and now 30 new employees work to produce five metric tons of brown or white rice per hour.

### **Results:**

Constructed and modernized a rice mill capable of producing five metric tons of rice per hour.

Created 30 new jobs.

Created an Arkansas-based, minority owned company.

### **Testimonial:**

"The Arkansas Manufacturing Extension Network has played a vital role in helping us to rebuild our Rice Mill."

Ephron H. Lewis, President and CEO